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ABSTRACT

Focusing on written reports of student progress, this paper seeks to help principals and instructional improvement committees in individually guided education schools analyze their reporting systems. The report clarifies the reasons for and the philosophical bases of reporting student progress, discusses the impact of such reporting on school-community relations, suggests alternative methods of reporting cognitive and affective achievement, and outlines a process a school district might follow to change its reporting system. The methods of reporting cognitive achievement discussed are checklists, narrative reports, and the traditional system of letter grades. The two methods of reporting affective achievement are behavior attitude checklists and comment cards. Examples of forms to be used in these methods are provided. A school or district that wants to change its reporting system should go through a nine-step analysis process that includes establishing the mandate, forming a committee, analyzing what is presently in use, establishing criteria for a new system, analyzing alternative methods, building a new system, routing decisions, implementing the program, and evaluating the new system. A rationale is presented for involving school-community members in decision-making on a reporting system. (Author/IRT)

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Simformation 5

Reporting student progress

THE WISCONSIN RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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HOME·SCHOOL·COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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FOREWORD

Since 1973, the Home-School-Community Relations Project at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning has been involved in research related to the establishment of a supportive, meaningful relationship among the home, school, and community. Support and cooperation, which lead to optimal child growth and development, can exist when two conditions are met:

1. the staff of a school is aware of and responsive to the educational expectations and available resources of the community; and
2. the community is aware of and responsive to the instructional expectations and the program being implemented at the school.

Schools become involved in many activities directed at creating good relationships among the home, school, and community. Unfortunately, these activities are often unrelated and unfocused. By establishing a home-school-community relations program, rather than simply participating in a set of relatively isolated activities, a school can begin to develop a mutually supportive relationship among the home, school, and community.

There are four steps to creating a good home-school-community relations program. First, an analysis of the present state of school-community relations must be conducted. This analysis involves determining the issues or problems which exist and identifying those groups in the community which are associated with the issues. Second, the school staff must plan a program which is based upon the issues and groups that have been identified. This step includes planning a coordinated set of activities appropriate to the school community, identifying the personnel who will be responsible for carrying out various aspects of these activities, and setting timelines and procedures for the implementation of the program. The third step consists of implementing the program, and the final step is its evaluation. The program is evaluated by determining whether the appropriate activities, responsible personnel, and correct timelines and procedures were identified. This evaluation occurs both during and following implementation of the plan.

(continued on back cover)

SIMFORMATION 5

REPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

by

William R. Miles

Report from the Project on
Home-School-Community Relations

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The mission of the Wisconsin Research and Development Center is to improve the quality of education by addressing the full range of issues and problems related to individualized schooling. Teaching, learning, and the problems of individualization are given concurrent attention in the Center's efforts to discover processes and develop strategies and materials for use in the schools. The Center pursues its mission by

- conducting and synthesizing research to clarify the processes of school-age children's learning and development
- conducting and synthesizing research to clarify effective approaches to teaching students basic skills and concepts
- developing and demonstrating improved instructional strategies, processes, and materials for students, teachers, and school administrators
- providing assistance to educators which helps transfer the outcomes of research and development to improved practice in local schools and teacher education institutions

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WISCONSIN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
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I

INTRODUCTION

A report of a student's progress is often the most visible and tangible communication between the home and the school. The report from school that the parents receive reflects directly their joys and sorrows and their hopes and aspirations for their children. Parents may find out what their children are doing in school, and how they are doing, through various forms of home-school contacts, including informal visits, conferences, back-to-school nights, and specific reports of student progress. This simformation centers on written reports of student progress and has four main purposes:

- to clarify the reasons for and philosophical bases of reporting student progress;
- to discuss the impact of reporting on school-community relations;
- to suggest alternative methods of cognitive and affective reporting; and,
- to outline a process that a school or district may follow to change its reporting system.

II

REASONS FOR AND PHILOSOPHICAL BASES OF REPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

The overriding reason for reporting student progress is to transmit information from teachers to parents about a student's work and behavior in school. This purpose is illustrated by what schools report and how they report it.

Schools typically report about three educational domains of growth: (1) the cognitive area, or knowledge base; (2) the affective area, or behavioral attitudes; and (3) the psycho-motor area, or fine and gross motor skills. The cognitive area refers to how much or how fast a student has learned a subject such as reading, math, or social studies. This domain is most familiar to parents. The affective area refers to the attitude that the student has toward himself or herself, toward others, and toward school. The psychomotor area relates mainly to the physical education program. Reports might cover growth in small and large motor skills such as art, swimming, or team sports.

There are two major philosophical bases for reporting student progress: to document growth or progress on criterion-referenced instruction and to give relative standing or a normative classification.

Growth or progress means that there is evidence of a change from point a to b, from not knowing something to knowing it, from not being able to do a task to mastery of it. Evidence may be gathered by pre- and post-testing or by observation. This format is associated with a

criterion-referenced instructional program based on behavioral objectives. The student is measured against himself or herself and a prepared set of standards. Growth means movement and documented change in knowledge, skill, or attitude toward goals established according to the individual's needs and abilities.

To report relative standing, a group of students is frozen at a particular time, and a grade that reflects his or her position is given to each one. The student may be measured against his or her classmates or against a larger population. Classifications such as below, at, or above grade levels, or A, B, or C's are normative judgments of how the students match up against each other at a particular point in time. These classifications do not document the progress of the individual student.

III

IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Reporting is a very tangible and visible aspect of communication between the school and the home. In the model of school-community interaction developed by the Home-School-Community Relations Project at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, interactions between the home and the school can take on many different patterns.

Most schools, however, use reporting to show how the student is doing in the school's educational program. Because these reports are written, they are sometimes used for purposes for which they were not intended. For example, parents often use report cards to compare their children with each other or with other children in the neighborhood. They even compare their children's grades against what they remember of their own school histories. Many people believe that an A is an A is an A and a failing grade means that the child is not doing the job. In reality, this is not true. Humpty Dumpty told Alice that his words mean exactly what he intends them to mean and nothing else. The same is true of grades. They mean what the teacher intends and nothing else. Comparing children or judging their potential according to the grades they bring home is very hard on children and is unfair. It can make report card time traumatic and frightening. Yet, because the grades are tangible and available, parents want to show them and compare them.

Grades and reporting systems are quite vulnerable to criticism and attack. The visibility of reporting systems and grading and the concern that parents and citizens feel about them, can be illustrated by two recent national phenomena. The fundamental, or back-to-basics, alternative elementary schools that have sprung up across the country all have in common an A, B, C letter grade reporting system. There seems to be little disagreement among parents and citizens about how to grade and report students on fundamental, basic education. Secondly, many universities and high school communities are caught up in a "grade inflation" controversy. Elaborate tables have been constructed to illustrate how more high grades are being given out today than ever before, while, at the same time, scores on college board exams have declined.

Report cards can be compared, used as a spark for threats or praise, and can bring back memories of past successes or failures. They are tangible and visible for all to see as written documentation of the child's progress in the school's educational program.

Many schools which have changed over to Individually Guided Education have altered their school philosophy, organization, and operation--all in a very short time. For example, many schools have changed from three basal reading groups in a self-contained classroom to a multi-aged individualized program. Philosophical differences may arise when a school that has changed in many important ways retains a group-based reporting system--whether because of district policy, demands of parents, a timid administration, or a fatigued faculty. Several school districts are giving parents a chance to help determine the way reporting information is presented--they may choose among letter grades, behavioral checklists, monthly telephone calls, or other methods.

IV

ALTERNATIVE REPORTING SYSTEMS

In this section three different ways of reporting student progress will be discussed. Examples of several different systems will be given along with their philosophical context, procedures, advantages and disadvantages, and implications for school-community relations.

THE CHECKLIST SYSTEM (See Example 1)

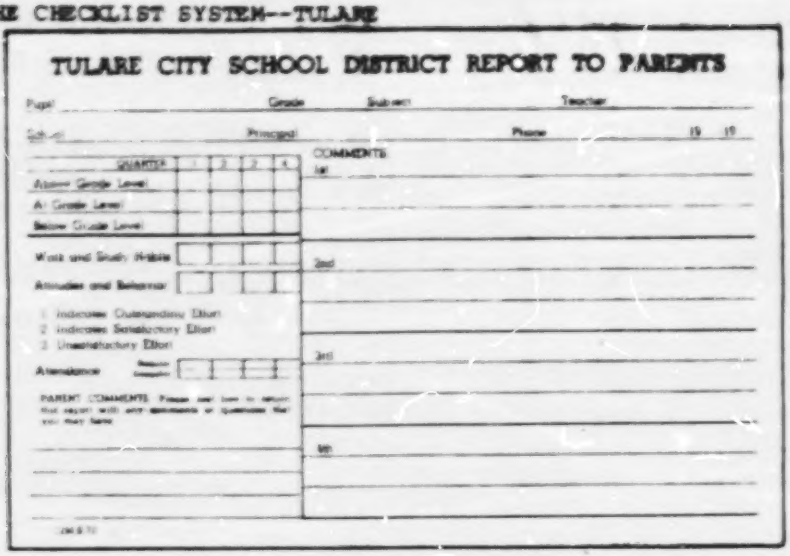
Philosophical Context--Use of a behavioral objectives checklist is one way to report an individual student's growth or mastery of concepts. The student is measured according to his or her own progress and ability and not on class or unit progress.

Procedures--Teachers check off statements which reflect mastery of behavioral objectives, for example being able to count to 100. Mastery levels can be determined by the Instructional Improvement Committee, by district policy, or by custom, such as requiring a score of 80 percent or better on post-tests for the Word Attack element of the Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development. The student may demonstrate mastery on the pre-test, showing that he or she is ready for more advanced instruction.

Advantages--The behavioral objectives checklist is a concise, precise, and individualized way of describing a student's growth. Parents can learn exactly what is being taught in the various disciplines and also what the child will be taught in the future.

EXAMPLE 1A

THE CHECKLIST SYSTEM--TULARE



TULARE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT TO PARENTS

Pupil _____ Grade _____ Subject _____ Teacher _____

School _____ Principal _____ Phone _____ 19 ___ 19 ___

QUARTER	1	2	3	4
Above Grade Level				
At Grade Level				
Below Grade Level				
Work and Study Habits				
Attitudes and Behavior				

1 Indicates Outstanding Effort
2 Indicates Satisfactory Effort
3 Unsatisfactory Effort

Attendance _____ Reason _____

PARENT COMMENTS. Please feel free to attach this report with any comments or questions that you may have.

COMMENTS
1st
2nd
3rd
4th

In Tulare, Calif., the schools have eliminated A-B-C as grades, replacing them with a system of evaluation in reference to the curriculum the student is working in.

At the right is shown a summary report form (5½" x 8½") sent to parents each quarter to indicate the pupil's level of work and his study habits, attitudes and behavior. This form is sent with a set of mimeographed sheets (three for grade 1, six or seven for grade 8) which outline in detail the curriculum and/or goals in each subject. Check marks are used to indicate content mastered or under way. This detailing of curriculum includes both academic subjects and special subjects, as illustrated below through the excerpts from the grade 4 lists for art and music. Teachers present further evaluations, narrative-style, on separate 8½" x 11" memo sheets.

MUSIC - GRADE FOUR
EXPLORING MUSIC 4

Is gaining a basic understanding of melody, rhythm and harmony through:

- ☐ playing tonettes
- ☐ playing other instruments
- ☐ moving to music
- ☐ music reading
- ☐ singing
- ☐ listening

- ☐ Review of all 3rd grade objectives
- ☐ Feeling of time signatures $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$
- ☐ Note values, sixteenth notes
- ☐ Note name
- ☐ First and second endings
- ☐ D.C. De Capo, Fine
- ☐ D.S. or D.S. al Fine, (from the sign)
- ☐ Understanding Keys: C, F, and G
- ☐ Rounds (texture)
- ☐ Two part signing (texture)
- ☐ Creating their own dance & music
- ☐ Creating ostinato to certain selections in text
- ☐ Key of C, G and F using autoharp
- ☐ Use of the autoharp, guitar, tonettes or recorders
- ☐ Use of folk dances

ART - GRADE FOUR

- ☐ Uses research & field trips for creative motivation
- ☐ Sees exhibits & reproductions of artist's work
- ☐ Mixes colors to meet creative needs
- ☐ Aware of light & dark, full & bright
- ☐ Developing concept of depth
- ☐ Developing figure drawing in action
- ☐ Exploring visual representation through sketching actual models
- ☐ Awareness of balance & composition
- ☐ Uses lines, texture, color creatively
- ☐ Aware of arts & crafts of other cultures
- ☐ Uses overlapping & simple perspective
- ☐ Has expressed thoughts & feelings in visual terms through the use of:
  - painting: tempera paint
  - drawing: crayon, colored chalk
  - paper mache
  - weaving, stitchery
  - paper sculpture
  - collage
  - modeling: clay, dough
  - murals
  - constructions: wood, reed, wire, cardboard
  - printing: monotype, string, styrofoam
  - watercolor
  - mixed media
  - mosaics
  - lettering & posters
  - seasonal activities

EXAMPLE 1B

THE CHECKLIST SYSTEM--GLEN VIEW

GLEN VIEW SCHOOL

Pupil_____ Date_____

Teacher_____ Grade 2

Dear Parents,

The list presented here is intended to give you a better understanding of your child's accomplishments this quarter. The list is by no means complete, but merely provides a brief summary of basic skills presented this quarter.

	Mastered	In Progress	Readiness	Not Observed
READING, PHONICS				
Long Vowel Sounds				
Short Vowel Sounds				
Can Unlock Words Using Phonetic Analysis				
Uses Pictorial and Context Clues to Aid in Reading				
Reads With Understanding				
Is Able to Read Orally in Complete Thought Units				
LANGUAGE ARTS				
Is Able to Spell Assigned and Basic Vocabulary Words				
Is Able to Write Simple Sentences				
Understands Use of Periods, Question Marks, and Capital Letters				
Can Form Letters Legibly and Correctly				
Can Express Ideas Clearly in Written Form				
Takes Part in Oral Discussions				
Verbalizes Ideas Clearly				
MATH				
Can Form Numerals Correctly				
Can Identify Cardinal and Ordinal Numbers to Ten				
Knows Addition and Subtraction Facts to Ten				
Understands Mathematical Vocabulary (sets, addend, sum, greater than, less than, equal to, number line, equation)				
Can Work with Manipulative Materials Profitably (counters, cuisenaire rods, beansticks, abacus, geoboards, tangrams)				
SOCIAL STUDIES				
Understands the Idea of a Community				
Knows the Uses of Maps and Globes				
Understands the Use of Scale and Legend				
Can Locate Simple Points and Areas on the Globe				
SCIENCE				
Understands the Idea of Molecules				
Participates in Discussions and Experiments				
Is Able to Draw Conclusions on the Basis of Experiments				
MUSIC				
Enjoys Music Activities				
Participates in Music Activities				
Is Able to Listen to and Interpret Music				
ART				
Shows Originality				
Is Able to Use a Variety of Media (scissors, paste, tempera, crayons)				
Can Use Materials Effectively				

This grade 2 report form, from Glen View School, Escondido Union School District, Calif., illustrates the trend toward giving parents details on what their children are learning in school.

The form is an 8½" x 11" mimeographed sheet presenting a list which has been prepared (as the introduction points out) to give parents a better understanding of their child's accomplishments during the quarter. The school uses similar checklists to detail children's accomplishments in each area at first- and third-grade levels.

Glen View School (See Source No. 7)
Escondido Union School District, California

Checklists usually extend over two or more years. Elementary schools usually use one report card for the primary grades and a different one for the intermediate grades because such a large number of behavioral objectives are taught over the seven years of elementary school that one card could not list them all. Objectives are generally collapsed into such phrases as "demonstrates ability to use number skills" or "is accurate in computing." Each of these statements may be divided into several sequenced behavioral objectives to give parents a better understanding of what the child is learning.

Disadvantages--There are both philosophical and practical objections to behavioral objectives checklists. The philosophical objections arise from criticism of the Tyler rationale (11) and the critics' view that curricula become over-simplified with demonstrable behavioral objectives. One of the leaders of the behavioral objectives movement, W. James Popham, has recently advocated backing away from total reliance on behavioral objectives (11).

Practical objectives arise from the specificity of the statements used, such as the math examples above--"demonstrates ability to use number skills." Parents may ask: How often can he or she demonstrate ability, with what number skills, with what faculty, with what level of numbers, etc.? Each item on a checklist can only briefly describe the skill in question.

Teachers criticize checklists because they necessitate complicated record keeping and because of the number of decisions teachers must make for each child. A typical checklist might have 50 items. Multiplied by the number of students in a homeroom, class, or unit, the complexity

of the decision making task is enormous. To do a good job, teachers must keep specific records on each child in each curriculum area about which they report.

School-Community Implications--Checklists are the newest and, therefore, the strangest form of student progress report in the eyes of parents and community members. With them, parents cannot directly compare their children to other students or to their own school experiences. They do, however, more accurately reflect the child's progress in an individualized curriculum, and they can be explained to parents.

School-community relations could be improved if a school changed to a checklist system for any one or a combination of reasons. It might mean a more accurate reflection on the school's program. A behavioral checklist would convey to parents the realities of individualized instruction by showing the progression of student work. It might demonstrate greater accountability by illustrating what skills or knowledge the student can actually demonstrate.

The checklist can be designed to reflect the school's program more accurately than the traditional report card. As a result, parents can read the checklist to better understand what an individualized instructional program is and its implications for their children. Perhaps most importantly, the checklist will tell parents how their children are really doing in school, what they are learning, and what they are having trouble with. Parents who understand the school's program are more likely to feel good about the school and be willing to cooperate with the school staff.

NARRATIVE REPORT CARDS (See Example 2)

Philosophical Context--Narrative report cards are another individualized format for reporting the growth or net change of a particular student. Teachers must take into account a student's abilities, needs, desires, motivations, and his or her performance in the reporting period.

Procedures--Teachers gather information for narrative cards from pre- and post-tests, checklists, anecdotal records, and observation. Obviously, they need to have some "hard" information upon which to base the descriptions of the student's progress which are written on the card. Progress on each academic subject is summarized in one or more paragraphs. One school system in Massachusetts requires one page in each of four subject areas twice a year.

Advantages--Narrative report cards are the most personal type of individualized reporting system. They should reflect an intimate knowledge of the student and his or her potential. Ideally, the parents will be aware of the flow of the curriculum so that they can understand the teacher's description of the child's progress.

Disadvantages--Narrative report cards work to the degree that parents and teachers agree on the meaning of the words used by the teacher to describe the child's progress. Misunderstandings can arise if the words chosen have different connotations for parents and teachers. If the phraseology used is loose or unspecific, parents can rightfully complain that they're not being told anything about their child's progress. Another factor is that often teachers can write several pages about some children and subjects, but have difficulty writing even a paragraph about others. Probably the greatest obstacle to narrative

BETHEL PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT

SOCIAL STUDIES - Level F

Student_____ Teacher_____

	Working Toward Objective	Objective Achieved	COMMENTS 1	2	3	4
A. Applies an understanding of physical geography (map and globe skills; terms; symbols) through the study of Canada						
B. Shows an understanding of:						
1. Colonization of Northeast						
2. Colonization of South						
3. Colonization of Middle States						
4. Struggle for Freedom and Firm Government						
5. Expansion of the Continent						
6. Newest States of U.S.A.						
7. A Nation Divided (Civil War)						

Current reporting instruments used at elementary and middle school levels in Bethel Park, Pa., show how the district is bringing evaluation in line with individualized instruction and efforts to help each child progress at his own rate in line with his own level of ability.

Shown above is one form (8½" x 11") from a set of reports sent quarterly to parents of students at Level F (fifth grade). This form covers social studies, providing opportunity for the teacher to check whether the pupil is meeting or has met objectives, and to offer comments. Similar forms cover all other subjects and "Behavior Management."

The behavior form includes "Practices good citizenship," but emphasizes behaviors essential in independent study, obviously important in an individualized program; for example: "Finds, seeks and obtains help when needed," "Evaluates and checks work in a responsible manner," "Directs himself toward new goals." Ratings are C (Consistently), O (Occasionally) and N (Not yet).

Parents receive two additional forms at the end of the year — one a summary sheet on achievement of objectives, the other providing information on the pupil's scores on standardized achievement tests.

This district times its reports to aid individualized instruction. The first three reports are staggered for various pupils to reduce comparison and competition, pupil to pupil, and to give teachers more time to prepare evaluations. The staggering of reports accommodates the scheduling of semiannual parent conferences, which are an essential ingredient of this individualized evaluation system.

Bethel Park School District (See Source No. 7)
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

report cards is lack of time. With time at a premium for teachers and unit leaders, narrative report cards may be too time consuming to be worthwhile.

School-Community Implications--Narrative report cards are the most intimate and personalized form for reporting student progress. If carefully and thoughtfully filled out they can show sympathy and understanding far better than checks or grades. Like checklists they show exactly what is being taught in the various disciplines.

Also like checklists, narrative report cards are largely unfamiliar to parents and community members so parents cannot make direct comparisons. They can reflect the school's program even more accurately than checklists and tell parents even more about how their children are doing. Teachers can use the narrative to express their concern for each child and their understanding of his or her uniqueness. They can raise questions about the child which might lead to a positive dialogue between the school and the community. If teachers take full advantage of the open format of the narrative report card, they could lead to interaction and cooperation between the school and the community.

THE A, B, C SYSTEM (See Example 3)

Philosophical Context--A, B, C grading systems report the student's standing compared to others in his or her class or unit. It is neither an individualized nor a growth reporting system. The grade reflects the student's relative standing at one point in time, rather than mastery or progress.

PROGRESS REPORT FOR PRIMARY

St. Louis Public Schools
St. Louis, Missouri

PUPIL'S NAME

SCHOOL — SCHOOL YEAR 19 — 19

MARKS	EXPLANATION	1ST 10 WEEKS	2ND 10 WEEKS	3RD 10 WEEKS	4TH 10 WEEKS
A	VERY GOOD	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
B	GOOD				
C	SATISFACTORY	LEVEL	LEVEL	LEVEL	LEVEL
D	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT				
F	BELOW MINIMUM REQUIREMENT				

ACADEMIC PROGRESS		10 WEEK PERIODS 1	2	3	4
READING	READS ORALLY				
	READS WITH UNDERSTANDING				
	IS ACQUIRING BASIC SKILLS				
	EFFORT				
LANGUAGE	EXPRESSES IDEAS WELL ORALLY				
	EXPRESSES IDEAS WELL WRITTEN				
	IS DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS				
	EFFORT				
SPELLING	KNOWS WORDS FOR LEVEL				
	APPLIES BASIC SKILLS				
	EFFORT				
MATHEMATICS	IS ACQUIRING BASIC SKILLS				
	APPLIES BASIC SKILLS				
	UNDERSTANDS WORD PROBLEMS				
	EFFORT				
HANDWRITING	IS ACQUIRING NEEDED SKILLS				
	APPLIES SKILLS CONSISTENTLY				
	EFFORT				

SYSTEMS	READING PROGRAMS	OPEN HIGHWAYS
15 25 35 45		STARTER CONCEPT CARDS
*		READY TO ROLL
55 65 75 85		ROLLING ALONG
**		**
95 105 115 125		MORE POWER
***		MOVING AHEAD
		***
		SPLENDID JOURNEY
		SPEEDING AWAY

MARKS: S - SATISFACTORY N - NEEDS IMPROVEMENT U - UNSATISFACTORY	1	2	3	4
SOCIAL STUDIES				
SCIENCE HEALTH				
MUSIC ART				
PHYSICAL EDUCATION				

SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT					
WORK AND BEHAVIOR HABITS	LISTENS CAREFULLY				
	USES PROFITABLY BUSY				
	WORKS CAREFULLY AND NEATLY				
	BEGINS AND COMPLETES WORK PROMPTLY				
	FOLLOWS DIRECTIONS				
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH	WORKS WELL WITH OTHERS				
	SHOWS COURTESY AND POLITENESS				
	SHOWS GROWTH IN SELF CONTROL				
	RESPECTS RIGHTS AND OPINIONS OF ADULTS AND FELLOW PUPILS				

ATTENDANCE RECORD	10 WEEK PERIODS 1	2	3	4	YEAR'S TOTAL
DAYS PRESENT					
DAYS ABSENT					
TIMES TARDY					

TEACHER'S COMMENTS

TEACHER _____ ROOM _____

PRINCIPAL _____

PUPIL IS ASSIGNED TO LEVEL _____ GRADE _____ SEPTEMBER 19 _____

EXAMPLE 3
THE A, B, C GRADING SYSTEM

EXAMPLE 3 (Cont.)

THIS A, B, C GRADING SYSTEM

PROGRESS REPORT - GRADES 4 - 8

St. Louis Public Schools
St. Louis, Missouri

PUPIL _____ ROOM _____

SCHOOL _____ GRADE _____ SCHOOL YEAR 19____ 19____

ACHIEVEMENT GRADES	EXPLANATION	EFFORT GRADES
A	VERY GOOD	1
B	GOOD	2
C	SATISFACTORY	3
D	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	4
F	UNSATISFACTORY	5

S - SATISFACTORY N - NEEDS IMPROVEMENT U - UNSATISFACTORY

STUDY HABITS

	1	2	3	4
WORKS INDEPENDENTLY				
USES TIME CONSTRUCTIVELY				
COMPLETES ASSIGNMENTS				
PARTICIPATES IN DISCUSSIONS				

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

		10 WEEK PERIODS 1	2	3	4
READING					
AT LEVEL _____ BELOW LEVEL _____	COMPREHENSION				
	VOCABULARY				
	EFFORT				
LANGUAGE					
	ORAL				
	WRITTEN				
	EFFORT				
SPELLING					
	IN REQUIRED AREAS				
	IN OTHER AREAS				
	EFFORT				
HANDWRITING					
MATHEMATICS					
AT LEVEL _____ BELOW LEVEL _____	COMPUTATION				
	PROBLEM SOLVING				
	EFFORT				
SOCIAL STUDIES					
	EFFORT				
SCIENCE AND HEALTH					
	EFFORT				
PHYSICAL EDUCATION					
	EFFORT				
ART					
MUSIC					
OTHER SUBJECTS (MIDDLE SCHOOL)					

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

	1	2	3	4
COOPERATES WITH CLASSMATES				
COOPERATES WITH TEACHERS				
PRACTICES SELF-CONTROL				
ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY				
ACCEPTS CONSEQUENCES OF OWN ACTION				
RESPECTS RIGHTS AND OPINIONS OF OTHERS				

ATTENDANCE

	10 WEEK PERIODS 1	2	3	4	YEAR'S TOTALS
DAYS PRESENT					
DAYS ABSENT					
TIMES TARDY					

ASSIGNED TO GRADE _____ FOR 19____ 19____

TEACHER'S COMMENTS

TEACHER _____

PRINCIPAL _____

Procedure--Teachers normally decide in advance what level of performance constitutes an A, B, or C, and award grades on that basis. Hopefully, teachers let the students know in advance what levels of performance are expected so that students will have meaningful goals, but this is not always the case. Some schools use criterion grading with an A, B, C format (see Resource 2). Some teachers still use the "normal curve" of academic ability to determine grades or establish a class curve.

Advantages--The most pressing advantage of letter grades is their traditional connection with basic, fundamental education. Letter grades are certainly most familiar to parents and, therefore, have greater acceptability. Letter grades are a group-based measure in which students are measured against the achievement of their peer group. However, some flexibility could be introduced to indicate that a student is also being measured against his or her potential (see Resource 12).

Disadvantages--There are several disadvantages to letter grading in IGE schools. As a group measure, they are not consistent with an individualized philosophy of learning. They set up a competitive reward system in which some children must succeed and others must "fail." Further, letter grades could very well place too great a burden on rote learning of facts rather than on mastering skills and concepts.

School-Community Implications--The familiarity with the A, B, C grading system and its connotation of "basic education" have already been discussed. There is no doubt that, by and large, letter grading is what parents understand and many prefer.

If a school decides to keep the A, B, C grading system, the faculty and community must resolve the conflict between a norm-based grading system and an instructional system based on the individual's needs and progress. The school staff must adapt the A, B, C grading system to fit the needs of the individualized program, or live with it and re-educate the parents in their community so that they understand what the letters mean.

For an IGE school to return to an A, B, C grading system would raise many questions in the community. Many parents would feel that this was a return to the "old way" even if nothing else in the program were changed. Some parents would find this a positive move--back to more fundamental, "basic" education. Others would feel that this was a negative change--back to competition among students and "learning" only for grades.

If an IGE school were to change to an A, B, C grading system, the school-community implications would be pervasive. Certainly, comments would be heard about the school "returning" to A, B, C grading, even if they hadn't altered anything else in the school program. Many might associate this move to a step "back" to a more fundamental, "basic" education because of the connotation of A, B, C's with earlier practices.

V

ALTERNATIVE AFFECTIVE REPORTING METHODS

Descriptions of affective behavior and attitude are almost always included in school reporting systems along with reports of progress on subject matter. Affective reporting can be just as successful or misleading as any cognitive reporting method.

BEHAVIOR ATTITUDES CHECKLIST (See Example 4)

Philosophical Context--A checklist is an individualized report that reflects the student's behavior. The individualized student is the unit of measure and his or her behavioral growth may or may not be documented.

Procedure--Teachers may keep a file of anecdotal notes on their students, they may discuss the student's behavior with team members, or they may make mental notes and remember how a student has behaved for a given period of time. The teacher makes a check mark in the column that accurately describes the student's behavior.

Advantages--These checklists are easy to administer. They represent the collective agreement of how students should behave in school. They should remain constant so that behavior or misbehavior can be tracked from teacher to unit and so on. Because school behavior is reported to parents, checklists may become an incentive to be "good" or a deterrent to act out. Coupled to a system of conferences or telephone contacts, behavior checklists can nicely complement the reporting of cognitive growth.

MEANING OF SYMBOLS

1. Much progress
2. Satisfactory progress
3. Improving slowly

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL GROWTH	1	2	3
Takes care of personal needs		X	
Attends school happily	X		
Works and plays well with others		X	
Shows consideration for others	X		
Brings and shares ideas and belongings	X	X	
Shows interest in school activities	X		

GROWTH IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES			
Speaks clearly in a pleasant voice	X		
Listens and attempts to follow directions	X		
Enjoys stories and poetry	X		
Shows an active interest in learning experiences	X		
Participates during conversation periods and dramatizations		X	
Handles materials constructively	X	X	
Cleans up and puts things away when finished with an activity	X		
Enjoys and participates in various types of musical activities	X		

Pupil Susan

School _____ Principal _____

Teacher _____

Date _____

Teacher Observation and Recommendation:

Susan always comes to school wearing a pleasant smiling face. She tends to be shy and reserved in the classroom. During activity period she prefers to play alone or with a couple of girls in the housekeeping area or doing an art activity quietly at the table.

Everything that Susan does in the room, she does neatly and quietly. The artwork that she does in school reflects patience and detail. She takes great pride in accomplishing a neat and attractive finished product. Susan likes to be a helper in the room and receive the extra praise for her work. She is developing a good attention span for daily stories read in class. Her music interest is also good. She participates in group singing in a quiet manner.

Susan's quiet mannerisms are very inviting to her classmates and she has been a very pleasant addition to our classroom.

Grade Placement for Next School Year _____

Room Number _____

Days Present _____ Days Absent _____ Times Tardy ____

To the Parent or Guardian:

It is the responsibility of the school to help each child develop to the fullest extent possible, both intellectually and as a happy, cooperative, and successful individual. In kindergarten your child has the opportunity to strengthen many skills and concepts through work and play with other children. Growth is constantly encouraged by guiding each child in a manner compatible to his or her age and developmental pattern.

Since both parents and teachers share in this responsibility, the report of progress represents the school's attempt to appraise for you the growth and development of your child within the school setting. At the kindergarten level, the total reporting plan of the Wauwatosa Public Schools provides for the supplementation of this written report by a minimum of one parent-teacher conference during the school year.

Additional conferences may be held as necessary to call attention to outstanding improvement, exchange pertinent information, or discuss unusually slow development in some area.

John S. Fochs
Superintendent of Schools

WAUWATOSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

John S. Fochs, Superintendent

REPORT OF PROGRESS FOR JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

The Junior Kindergarten child learns through work and play activities how to take care of him or herself outside the home. He or she learns, also, how to get along with other children and how to use new materials and school equipment.

Disadvantages--On the negative side, behavior checklists can create some frightful disagreements about the true nature of a child if they are misinterpreted by parents. They are also statements which describe behavior for a given period of time. Because teachers are not able to keep a minute by minute check on behavior, their judgments may not reflect a true picture of the whole period of time under scrutiny. Rather, teachers establish a norm for behavior with this year's group of children and their past experiences and judge accordingly.

School-Community Implications--Use of behavioral checklists can be viewed positively by parents and community members because they represent some concern for areas of school behavior that parents care about. Most parents want to know how their child is acting in school as well as how he or she is doing. In that sense, behavioral checklists document that behavior.

COMMENT CARDS (See Example 5)

Philosophical Context--Comment cards are a personalized, individualized method of reporting. They focus on the child and not the class or unit. In some cases, behavior may be described in relation to other children, such as, "Suzy is a leader in her unit."

Procedure--Teachers may write out comment cards for all children or may send a comment card only when necessary. In either case, teachers have to search their memories or discuss children with unit teachers for comments to make. Comments may be brief, such as, "Jim is getting along well with his peers," or they may report a specific behavior. Comment cards may be used to initiate a telephone or school-home conference.

FRIENDLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ANY CITY, YOUR STATE

Dear _____,

_____
(date)

I thought you would like to know that your child, _____,

_____

_____

_____

My number at school is _____

_____
(signed) Teacher

Please tear off and return with your child.

___ I have received this note and will share it with my child.

___ I have received this note and will contact you.

___ I have received this note and would like you to contact me.

EXAMPLE 5
COMMENT CARDS

Advantages--Comment cards give teachers an opportunity to make highly personalized descriptions of a child's behavior. They can really cement a close school to home contact about an individual's idiosyncracies. They can make quite an impact at home and can be highly appreciated by parents.

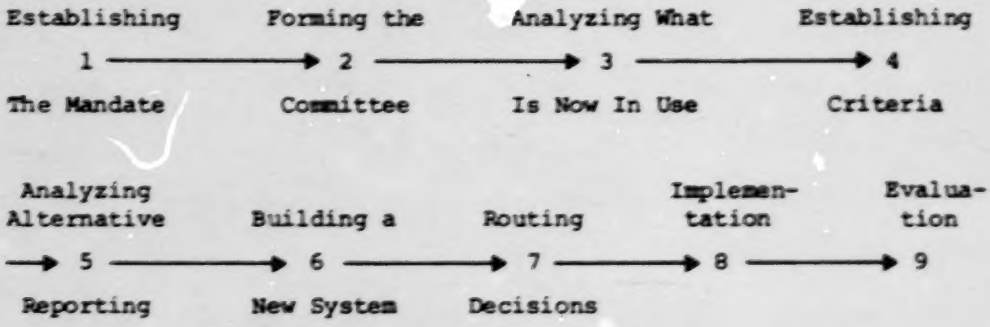
Disadvantages--Comment cards can be burdensome and time consuming if teachers must write one for every student for every reporting period. They may also result in friction when a parent does not agree with a teacher's observation. For example, when a teacher reports that the student tends to act out, the parents might think that their child is just normally active.

School-Community Implications--Comment cards about student behavior can be an effective bonding force from school to home if they are well written and illustrate behaviors unique to each child. Hence, they have the potential of being some of the most effective communication between teacher and parent. Yet, they can also cause problems both at home and in school if care is not taken to write comments carefully and to document well both strengths and weaknesses.

VI

CHANGING A REPORTING SYSTEM

The first part of this simformation was designed to help schools clarify their policies and philosophies on reporting pupil progress. The second section provided examples and discussions of various ways to report pupil progress. The nine steps of analysis presented in this section are structured to help a committee or IIC change a school's or district's reporting system. The nine steps are:



The steps do not necessarily follow in exactly this order and some might be omitted in some cases. However, they do represent sound theory and experience.

Establishing the Mandate--Before anything else, it is important to stop and ask: Who initiated the request for a change in the reporting system and how wide is the base of support? These questions force the IIC, committee, or principal to determine just how many people are knowledgeable and informed about a need to change. Perhaps only a few members of the community are unhappy with the current system.

Or, the request may have come because there is a serious problem in the reporting system and a glaring need to rethink the total approach. Although it is important to know which people are concerned about the reporting system, it may not be critical to have grassroots support. If the school staff or administration sees that a change is needed, community support can be built through meetings, discussions, and other forms of home-school interaction.

Forming the Committee--Usually the committee will be started inside the school. This core group should analyze the community, utilizing some parent interviews or selective discussions with parents, to determine what kind of community involvement is best.

There are three different levels of parent involvement: total, reactive, and after-the-fact. The committee must determine whether parents want to be totally involved in every meeting and decision, whether they want to react to proposals made by staff, or whether they want to read about the new system after the staff has decided to adopt it. These three different styles of community participation are as different as the parents who make them up. The committee may feel that it cannot bring community members along on every new idea that comes up. Or, the community may accept the staff's leadership in an area in which staff is supposed to be expert.

Cues on community style can be gained through interviewing, discussion at advisory meetings, and general observation about the level of activities and involvement in school affairs.[1] However, whatever

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[1]See Simformation 4: School Administrator's Interview Handbook for more information on community analysis.

the level of community participation all major outcomes of the committee's deliberations should be publicized. It might also be helpful to publish agendas in advance so that interested parties can attend meetings.

Finally, it is important at this stage to clarify who controls the final decision to change the reporting system. Will the committee need board of education approval? Are reporting systems part of an administrative regulation controlled at the school level? Is reporting student progress a uniform district policy which would affect other elementary schools? Getting this issue clarified at the beginning will make the entire process easier.

Analyzing the Present System--This phase will usually be carried out at the second meeting of the larger committee (the core of school staff members with interested parents, etc.). A directed brainstorming session is encouraged.[2] Individuals should be given examples of the present system and an assignment to list the pros and cons of the present system on a sheet of paper. After a period of about 10 minutes, those ideas should be listed on large sheets of paper. Time should be taken to clarify individual items, but not for debate about them. This exercise allows people to express their thoughts without having to defend or debate them and allows both sides to present their positions.

The list should be publicized and opened up to additions and reactions. Listing the pros and cons of the current system shows that you are willing to look at what is good as well as what is wrong with the system. This procedure may also widen the base of support for reanalysis.

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[2]The Nominal Group Technique could be very useful for this. For more information on the Nominal Group Technique, see Andre L. Delbecq, Andrew H. Van de Ven, and David H. Gustafson, Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1975.

Establishing Criteria--Using the data gathered above, it should be fairly easy to generate a list of criteria for the new reporting system. The question should be phrased in this way: What elements should be included in a good reporting system?

The goals of the reporting system should be clarified during this stage. Is it the intent of the school to measure growth, to measure status, to match an individual against him or herself, or to measure an individual against others? Should school behavior be a part of the total reporting system? Should standardized testing results be a part of the total reporting system?

If disagreements arise, a "we agree" session[3] on how students learn might help to manage conflict in the committee. The consensus and good feelings which come out of this type of exercise can only aid the general cause of the committee. It certainly is not a waste of time for the members of the committee to see exactly where they do agree about education.

The criteria developed during this phase should be publicized to the sub-publics so that everyone concerned can see where the committee is headed both philosophically and practically. There should be no surprises about what the committee will ultimately recommend if the pros and cons and the criteria are clearly stated.

Analysis of Alternatives--It is extremely important to analyze report systems that are being used in other places. Teachers usually want to discuss and use ideas that others have found workable. There are several pure and hybrid varieties of the reporting alternatives

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[3]See the Nominal Group Technique for more about this procedure.

discussed above (see Sources 1, 6, and 7). It also might prove useful at a later time to have the committee members visit schools with effective reporting systems. Through these visits, staff members will be able to gather first-hand information about the systems.

Committee members should list the strengths and weaknesses of each reporting system under consideration. The agenda for each meeting should be posted in advance so that everyone is aware of the various alternatives which are being discussed. Members of the community may have suggestions about reporting systems of which the committee is unaware.

Match Criteria to a New System--This final meeting should be for making a decision. All of the collected reporting systems and examples should be laid on the table and committee members should ask themselves: Which one or ones do the job which we said we wanted done? Seriously consider building a new report card which would be unique to your school or district rather than accepting another district's system intact. The process can help to clarify your thinking and give everyone involved a tremendous sense of satisfaction when it is done. After you have defined your needs and examined several types of systems, and many people have said what they have liked and disliked, what they think a reporting system should be, and what they think about what others have, use that information to prepare a unique reporting system. Then present it for advice and reaction.

The system that you present should be an exact representation of what is being proposed, not a set of abstract statements. Teachers will want to talk about the new system, analyze it, and see how it will

work. You might want to leave the examples in a convenient spot for a while and let comments and suggestions filter around the school.

This is also the time to involve the school community. Go back to your earlier decision about how much involvement the community wants and needs. Certainly various community groups should know about any major changes. If the proper groundwork has been laid as has been suggested above, that information should be much easier to generate.

Decision Routing--No school can make a decision about a reporting system in isolation. There are central office personnel who must be informed, if not directly involved. There may be other schools in the district that are at least curious. There may be board of education members who will ask tough questions about how the decision was made. During the period of advice and consent the committee should explain how the decision was made. They should refer to the information which has been previously publicized and to the input received during the analysis and decision making. If the public understands how the decision was made, it will be more willing to support that decision.

Implementation--During the first marking period of the new reporting system, efforts should be made to ensure that the new system is used as it was intended. Definitions should be discussed and clearly written out. Everyone on the staff should be able to similarly define the terms used in the new report card. An introductory letter explaining the new features of the system and reasons for changing should be sent to parents. Even if the community was heavily

involved in changing the system, it is important to go back over the ground so that everyone has a clear understanding of the reasons for the change.

Evaluation--After the new reporting system has been used a few times, a survey of parents should be conducted. The survey should ask whether the parents think the new system meets the criteria established for it and should ask them about their general likes and dislikes. Questions should be open ended so that individuals will be able to write in comments if they wish.

VII

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS IN CHANGING REPORTING SYSTEMS

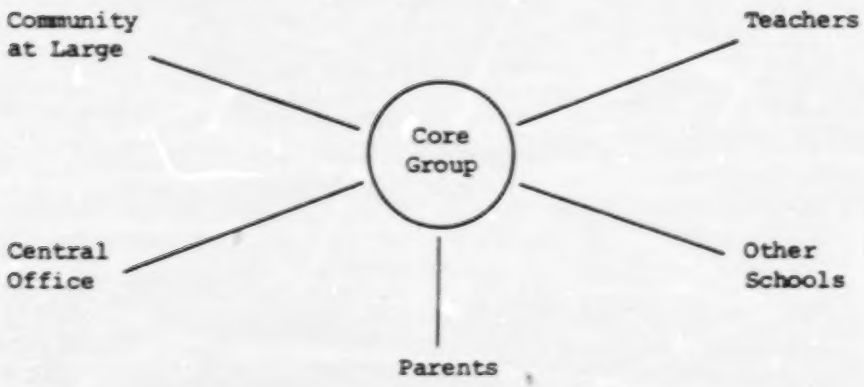
In the previous section, changing the reporting system was treated as though parents and community members might be kept out of the decision-making process. There are probably few communities in which the parents would initiate a reporting system change. Rather, that change usually is initiated by a core group of school insiders--principal, unit leaders, teachers. This section will attempt to present a rationale for involving the school-community members in decision making about their reporting system.

The most frequent problems in changing a report card are "tunnel vision" and the lack of good communication channels. People who accept a position on a committee charged with analyzing the school's reporting systems are seldom neutral. They want a change, and they are sure that the change will be for the better. Once they enter the tunnel of change, they want to rush the end of the tunnel with their "new and improved" reporting system, and they assume that others will agree.

Sub-Publics--Every school is surrounded by overlapping sets of sub-publics made up of different individuals. The change process discussed earlier has built in communication channels to these sub-publics, depicted below. They are integral parts of the school-community and must be included whenever important decisions are being made. Each of

these sub-publics should be considered when making decisions about the formation of the reporting committee and the routing of agendas or decisions. Depending on the committee's analysis of the community, they may or may not need to participate directly.

SUB-PUBLICS



Analysis--Using either the School Administrator's Interview Handbook (Simformation 4) or other community analysis techniques, the principal, IIC, or reporting committee should determine the proper style of community involvement.[4] In some communities, parents feel that the educators should assume leadership on school issues. They want to be kept informed and aware. In other communities, parents want to participate directly in the decisions made about their school. The committee should not assume that all communities are either the reactive or participatory type.

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[4]For more information about community analysis, see William R. Miles, "Home-School-Community Relations as a Political Process: Four Exploratory Case Studies of the Implementation of Individually Guided Education (IGE) and Home-School-Community Relations" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975), ERIC Document Reproduction Service Number ED 120 654.

Involvement--The amount and kind of school-community involvement will depend on the analysis made of the community. The stress should be placed on open one- and two-way communication. Short paragraphs could be placed in newsletters and agendas, meeting resumes, or letters sent to parents. An individual from the committee could also be assigned to report progress to specific community groups such as the Parent Advisory Committee or parent-teacher organization and to key individuals.

Resolution--After the committee has made its recommendation on a new reporting system, a process of final resolution will take place. School members will express their reactions and suggest alterations. Central office administrators will also react to the new system. Parents should be directly involved in this final phase of advice, consent, and alterations. In particular, they should be told the reasons for the change, the improvements sought, and how the reporting system will actually work.

VIII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this simformation was to help principals and IIC's analyze their reporting systems in IGE schools. To aid in that analysis, the purpose and philosophical bases of reporting student progress were examined. A school's reporting system must be firmly grounded in a philosophical base consistent with the school program as well as the needs of the parents and the community at large. The importance of reporting student progress was illustrated by two examples from current educational news. The philosophies, procedures, advantages, disadvantages, and school-community implications of three cognitive and three affective reporting systems were discussed. Finally, a model and process were outlined for changing a reporting system as well as analyzing the attendant implications for school-community relations.

While philosophy, purpose, and values have been stressed in this simformation, pragmatism should rule the final decision on a school's reporting system. People should use a reporting system that works for them and is consistent with their needs and desires.

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*Copies of dittoed materials can be obtained from the Home-School-Community Relations Project, Wisconsin Research and Development Center, 1025 West Johnson, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

In considering the activities which will help solve existing problems, it is essential that the school staff consider the following guidelines:

1. The entire school needs to be involved in creating good home-school-community relations. Teachers, aides, students, and parents, as well as the principal, must be involved in the home-school-community relations program;

2. The entire community must also be involved in creating good home-school-community relations. The school community includes more than the parents of students at the school. Senior citizens, business people, parochial school parents, and parents of preschoolers are important members of the school community;

3. Good home-school-community relations include more than mere communication with the school community. Good two-way communication between the community and the school is essential, but it is not sufficient. The creation of a supportive relationship requires community participation in decision-making, community involvement of time and resources in the school program, and resolution of school-community problems which exist.

A series of simformations designed to provide practical, hands-on materials to improve home-school-community relations are being developed by the R & D Center's Home-School-Community Relations Project. There are six simformations in the current series:

Simformation 1: Introducing Parents to the Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development

Simformation 2: A Guide to Organizing a Volunteer Program in IGE Schools

Simformation 3: Home-School Visits

Simformation 4: School Administrator's Interview Handbook

Simformation 5: Reporting Pupil Progress

Simformation 6: Parent-Teacher Conferences

These may be obtained from the CCL Document Service, 1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

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